REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GODALMING,
28th January, 1911.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to report that the health of the Borough of Godalming during the past year has been satisfactory. No new influences threatening to affect injuriously the sanitary conditions of the town have arisen, and the year has been unattended by serious epidemic disease.

Zymotic Diseases.—During the year 23 cases of notifiable infectious disease have been reported to me, viz.:—

Scarlet Fever	...	14 cases,	affecting	9	households.
Diphtheria	...	7 ,,	,,	4	,,
Erysipelas	...	2 ,,	,,	2	,,

The two cases of erysipelas were of a very mildly infective character, and were treated at home.

The scarlet fever and diphtheria patients were treated at the Joint Isolation Hospital at Woodbridge, with the exception of two who were isolated in school sanatoria within the Borough. The usual means of disinfection were rigorously employed in each instance, and contacts excluded from school. The efficacy of these measures is to some extent proved by the fact that although 21 cases were notified, these were confined to 13 households.

The free supply of antidiphtheritic serum to patients suffering from suspected diphtheria, as suggested by a recent circular order from the Local Government Board, is a step which will tend still more to lessen the ravages of this disease. The necessary measures have already been taken to carry this order into effect in this Borough.

No case of smallpox has been notified during the year, but the presence of an increasing number of unvaccinated children in the Borough may render serious the next epidemic of this disease. It is however satisfactory to note that the hospital at Whitmoor is kept in a state of readiness for the reception at very short notice of smallpox patients from this district, and that the necessary ambulance arrangements for their conveyance thither are complete.

With regard to infectious diseases which are not notifiable, a somewhat large number of children were attacked with whooping cough during the early spring, but the town has been comparatively free from other infectious disease during the year.

Births and Deaths.—154 babies were born in the Borough during 1910. The estimated population to the middle of the year is 9333, according to which the birthrate is 16·50 per 1000, the average for the preceding five years being 19·90.

Sixty-eight deaths were registered in the Borough itself, giving a rate of 7·27 per 1000. In addition to these, 23 persons belonging to Godalming died in County institutions. The following table gives the statistics:—

Deaths in Godalming Borough	...	68, at the rate of 7·27 per 1000.
,, Guildford Union Infirmary	...	18
,, Surrey County Hospital	...	4
,, Brookwood Asylum ...	...	1
Total deaths	...	91 at the rate of 9·75 per 1000.

The average death rates for the preceding five years are 8·46 and 10·80 for deaths in the Borough itself and total deaths respectively.

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From the above figures it will be seen that there is a decrease in both birth and death rates. Whether the actual decrease is so great as appears is open to doubt. The estimated population is calculated upon the rate of increase in population between the two last censuses. It is questionable whether such a rapid increase has taken place during the last ten years as during the ten years immediately preceding them, upon which the calculation is based. The approaching census will dispel all doubt upon the subject.

Phthisis.—Only seven deaths are attributed to phthisis. The Sanitary Authority is prepared to disinfect premises in which deaths from phthisis have occurred. This is done voluntarily and cannot be insisted on, but I mention it here so that the fact may become more widely known.

Infantile Mortality.—Seventeen infants under twelve months of age died during 1910. This gives a rate of 110·4 per 1000 births. This is a higher rate than we have been accustomed to of late years in this Borough, but is accounted for by the presence in the list of nine infants of premature birth, or suffering from congenital defects incompatible with life, who survived only a few days—in some instances only a few hours or minutes.

Water Supply.—The Corporation Waterworks have been fully able to meet the demands made upon them during the year. The water has been analysed periodically throughout the year and has invariably been found to possess a high degree of purity. The growing needs of the district have necessitated an extension of our present sources of supply, and within a few months the water from the new Ockford Valley borings will be available. The water from this new source promises to be plentiful, analysis gives it an excellent character as well suited for public use, and the Corporation may be congratulated on a most valuable addition to our present resources.

The last quarterly analysis and report by the County Analyst on a sample of the Corporation water will be found at the foot of this report.

Milk Supply.—The dairies, cowsheds and milk shops of the Borough have been regularly inspected. In every case the inspection has proved satisfactory.

Food Supply.—In addition to the shops for the sale of meat, fish, game, fruit and provisions, there are 17 bakehouses and 11 slaughterhouses in the town. All these premises have been regularly inspected, usually while work was in progress. Speaking generally, the conditions under which food is handled are highly satisfactory. No sign of tuberculosis has been detected in any meat exposed for sale. Several consignments of fish have been condemned during the summer months.

Sewage Disposal.—The whole of the Borough is connected with the main drainage system. There has been no difficulty in disposing of the sewage of the town during the past year. The Unstead Sewage Farm has efficiently coped with the large quantity of sewage presented to it. Work has been begun on the extension of the farm lately acquired, and there has been little difficulty in preserving the purity of the effluent to satisfy the high standard required by the Thames Conservancy Regulations.

Housing, Nuisances, &c.—Twenty new dwelling houses have been erected during the year. So far as the Borough is concerned the supply of housing accommodation is at last meeting the demand. The evil of overcrowding appears to be diminishing; it was found necessary to deal with only two cases by means of statutory notice, and in each the nuisance was satisfactorily abated without further proceedings.

Systematic district inspections have been undertaken during the year by the Sanitary Inspector and myself.

Thanks to persistent inspection and the ready co-operation of tenants and owners of property in undertaking necessary alterations, the structural condition of the dwellings in the Borough has much improved of late years.

Statutory notices have been served in eight cases of insanitary conditions in dwelling houses: in each case the necessary measures were promptly undertaken, and it is satisfactory to note that no prosecution to abate nuisances has been found necessary during the year.

The sanitary condition of the elementary schools within the Borough are good; the buildings are mostly modern, and those of older construction have been kept up to date as regards sanitary requirements. It has not been found necessary to order any school closure during the year.

The statistical returns for 1909 issued by the County Medical Officer of Health were flattering to the state of the public health of Godalming, and I trust that the return of the year under review will prove as good or better than those of its predecessor.

The County has lost the services of Dr. Seaton. His retirement is deplored by his colleagues in the public service, and I take this opportunity of recording my tribute to his unfailing courtesy and consideration.

Factory and Workshops Act, 1901.—The factories, workshops and workplaces have been duly inspected in accordance with the requirements of this Act, and the necessary schedule forwarded to the Secretary of State.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,
GERALD F. BIRD,
M.A., M.B., B.C. CANTAB.,
M.R.C.S. ENG., L.R.C.P. LOND.,
Medical Officer of Health.

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF WATER, 25TH JANUARY, 1911.

The results of Analysis expressed in grains per gallon were:—

Colour ...	none
Odour ...	none
Turbidity ...	none
Total solid matter	22·26
Losing on ignition	2·80
Combined chlorine	1·40
Equal to common salt	2·31
Nitrogen as nitrates	0·47
Nitrites	None
Saline Ammonia	0·002
Albuminoid Ammonia	0·0037
Oxygen absorbed from permanganate (4 hours at 80° F.)	0·024

Hardness (in degrees):—

Temporary	9·1°
Permanent	5·2°
Total ...	14·3°

Remarks:—

Chemical analysis reveals no pollution of this water, which is one well fitted for a public supply.

ED. HINKS.